

## X-ceptional talent at City Lit

Pictures by Nick Linford



X-Files actress Gillian Anderson presents the City Lit student awards. She is pictured with Ilyas Cader, who did deaf education courses, and (inset) Jason Putman, both 39. See campus round-up on page 10

Monday, May 6, 2013  
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David Frost interview



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Lynn Merilion on getting a grade four



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Campus Round-up



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*inside...*

## Provider's 'appalling' pass rate

Chris Henwood  
[@Chris\\_Henwood](#)

England's biggest apprenticeship provider has come under fire from the chair of a government watchdog after "appalling" figures revealed less than half of its retail and wholesale leavers qualified last year.

Just 47.5 per cent of Elmfield Training's 13,420 leavers in the sector aged 25 or more walked away with an apprenticeship certificate in 2011/12.

The official minimum level of performance (MLP) is 53 per cent and Elmfield was the only provider in this bracket (25 and over in the retail and wholesale learners, and with at least 100 leavers) to miss the quality threshold, according to National Success Rate Tables published by the Data Service.

A spokesperson for Elmfield, which delivered the majority of its apprenticeships for supermarket giant Morrisons, said that "tough trading conditions" in the retail sector made it difficult to access and support learners last year.

However, Adrian Bailey, chair of the Business, Innovation and Skills

### Just 6,375 out of 13,420 adult retail apprentices succeeded

(BIS) Select Committee, who has previously questioned Elmfield's profit levels, called for official action on the firm's performance.

"Elmfield is a major training provider in receipt of substantial funds from government," he said.

"With such a low level of success it seems that a large amount of public money was wasted."

"In light of the BIS Select Committee criticism of this company and its profits, demands were made upon the government to be more rigorous in its monitoring of Elmfield and value for money."

"These figures are appalling and I will be putting it to the committee that we write to the government pointing this out, and demanding action from both Ofsted and the Skills Funding Agency."

Elmfield, whose agency contract last academic year was £37,906,346 and currently stands at £27,649,434, was last inspected by Ofsted in July 2011 and got a satisfactory — grade three — rating. The education watch-

dog is due to visit again by September next year.

A spokesperson for the agency said it took "robust and proportionate action" where providers failed to reach performance targets.

"We are unable to provide specific details until we have discussed next steps with individual providers," she said.

Elmfield had 22,290 apprenticeship leavers across all ages and sectors, including business administration,

last year and achieved an overall success rate of 58.5 per cent. The next biggest, with 13,830 leavers, was Babcock, which achieved 71.4 per cent.

The Elmfield spokesperson said it was moving away from retail.

She said: "Fewer than 40 per cent of new learners joining our programmes are in retail this year and the proportion will continue to fall, partly as a result of Elmfield's decision not to tender for a new contract with Morrisons."

She added: "Further analysis of

2011/12 shows that, without retail 25+ learners, the success rate would be over 75 per cent.

"In retail, success rates for 16 to 18-year-olds was 79.4 per cent, comparing favourably to a sector national average of 75.1 per cent.

"For learners aged 19 to 24, the success rate was 75.1 per cent against the sector national average of 75.2 per cent. Of those learners who left without completing the framework the great majority (84 per cent) passed both the Qualifications and Credit Framework and technical certificates."

"For MLP purposes our performance against the new retail framework in 2011/12 was 67.9 per cent for all ages, and the 25+ success rate was 63 per cent."

"The strain put on our retail partners by the economic conditions in 2011/12 had a significant but shortlived effect on our performance."

"In previous years, Elmfield's performance has been significantly above the national average."

"We have now turned the corner and are pleased to see our success rate back where it belongs."

**Editor's comment p4**

## Edition 65

*FE Week* is the only newspaper dedicated to news, analysis, jobs and fun in the FE sector.

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## Top # City Lit awards tweets:

**@timngrier**  
 Tremendous City Lit Awards ceremony this evening, all students and tutors so inspiring

**@KeithMoffitt**  
 At City Lit Adult Learners Event at Royal Institution - our guest speaker tonight is Gillian Anderson. #starstruck

**@davidhNIACE**  
 On way to my first Adult Learners' Week event of this year @citylit with Gillian Anderson (X files fame) giving Hollywood glitz & glamour

**@impactssociety**  
 Congrats to all the @citylit award winners at last night's inspiring Annual Learners Celebration. What a great venue @ri\_science is too!

**@martinwimpres**  
 Congratulations @JasonHewitt123 on your Adult Achievement award @citylit annual awards last night at the #royalinstitution

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# New audit reviews cause 'major concern'

**Rebecca Cooney**

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A new audit system from the Skills Funding Agency has caused "major concern" within the FE sector.

Accountability reviews — described as "a key element of the agency's intervention strategy" — will consider not just financial management, but also governance and strategic oversight arrangements.

The announcement, which sources have told *FE Week* came as a surprise to many in the sector, was accompanied by a 58-page guidance document on the agency website.

It is understood the reviews could be used to assess the progress of providers issued with notices of concern relating to finances.

But Paul Warner, Association of Education and Learning Providers director of employment and skills, called for clarity on what action was needed from providers and whether audit would result in a straight pass or fail.

"We are unsure how these new guidelines fit with the existing Financial Health Guidelines which are applied to providers on the Register of Training Organisations [RTO]," he told *FE Week*.

"Does this new review override the existing guidelines and in particular the ratios submitted in an RTO application?"

He added: "The way that the audits are conducted will be crucial. While the guidelines themselves are generally acceptable, they cover a wide area and different auditors may reach different judgements on each aspect."

"If we have understood them correctly, they

seem to suggest that if a provider is judged inadequate or 'needs improvement' in any part of the inspection, a straight fail will result and for us, this is a major concern."

Agency guidance on the reviews says they will not be triggered by an Ofsted inspection, but will instead follow a risk-based schedule.

Key risks that would lead to a provider being flagged up on the schedule include "under-performance against allocations, key senior personnel changes or concerns and trends in success rates".

Providers would be notified that an accountability review was coming three to four weeks in advance.

Julian Gravatt, assistant chief executive at the Association of Colleges, said the audit plan would be looked at soon.

"We discussed the agency's plan to have targeted reviews to replace FMCE (Financial Management Control Evaluation) and we're currently discussing the new BIS intervention arrangements and the College Finance Directors Group will be reviewing the detail of this document," he said.

Each accountability review will examine management, including governance and strategic oversight, financial management and internal control arrangements.

The audit guidance added that reviews would not be undertaken at non-college providers with aggregate contracts under £10m.

An agency spokesperson said: "We would welcome comments from colleges and training organisations on how they could be further developed and refined in the future, particularly in respect of their scope, usefulness and content."

# Harlow tops the tables, again

**Rebecca Cooney**

[@RebeccaKCooney](#)

Harlow College has celebrated the highest general FE college qualification success rate in England for the second year running.

The Essex college achieved an all-age and all-duration success rate of 94 per cent for the year ending July 2012, meaning 10,171 qualifications were achieved out of 10,820 starts.

Principal Colin Hindmarch, who retires this week, said: "We have attained this through the dedication, hard work and unremitting resolve of our staff to ensure the outstanding success of all our students."

"We are well on track to achieve an even higher success rate for 2012/13 though there is, of course, much hard work to be done to ensure our students are successful."

The college's success rate was down 0.1 per cent from last year, but the number of starts had grown by just over half from 7,190, according to National Success Rate Tables published by the Data Service.

In second place was Highbury College, Portsmouth, with 93.6 per cent, followed by Runshaw College Lancashire, with 92.9

per cent.

However, for the 16 to 18 age group taking long courses, Harlow lost its 2010/11 top spot to Runshaw, which had 93.6 per cent success rate out of 10,890 starts in this group.

Runshaw spokesperson Tim Kayhill said that students would always be the college's priority. "If you make students happy and dream big then the Ofsted results and table results will follow on from that," he said.

Highbury College with 92.1 per cent and Farnborough with 91.8 per cent had the second and third slots, while Harlow came in at number four.

At the other end of the scale, Southwark College in London has the lowest success rates for 16 to 18 long courses, at just 66.9 per cent with 960 starters.

Southwark has since merged with Lewisham College to form LeSoCo, where a spokesperson declined to comment.

However, across all types and length of course, Southwark went up one place from its position at the bottom of the table in 2010/11, lifting its success rate of 65.8 per cent to 75.4 per cent last year.

Bottom place was taken by Hartlepool College, which had a success rate of 73.7 per cent.

## FE Week news in brief

### Curriculum report

The 157 Group has published a report which "shines a light" on ways colleges can overcome curriculum change.

*Curriculum Redesign in Further Education Colleges: Exploring Current Challenges and Opportunities*, is based on the findings of a project supported by the Learning and Skills Improvement Service and the Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education.

It was hoped the publication would serve as a guide for those redesigning their curriculum, a 157 Group spokesperson said.

### Traineeships wait

The countdown to traineeships was continuing as *FE Week* went to press.

The government is yet to launch final details of the scheme, which aims to help young people gain work-related skills and attitudes.

Traineeships were due to go live in September this year, but there has been no further detail in the 11 months following their announcement. A spokesperson for the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, said no date had been set for the traineeships launch.

### Cradle launched

A research centre with a focus on FE has been launched in Wolverhampton.

The new Centre for Research and Development in Lifelong Education was opened at the University of Wolverhampton's School for Education Futures (SEF).

Chaired by professor Denis Gleeson, the centre was described as "an important hub" for policy and practitioner research, by the Institute for Learning who established it in partnership with SEF.



Colin Hindmarch, principal of Harlow College, who retires this week

A Hartlepool spokesperson said the result was a "blip" that it was "determined to reverse".

"We are confident that outcome levels this year will return to the previously good performance evident up to 2012," he said.

The spokesperson added that 2011/12 had been demanding with many changes for the college, as had been acknowledged by Ofsted and the college's self-assessment report.

In its most recent Ofsted inspection in February the college was awarded an overall grade three — requires improvement — with inadequate for learner outcomes.

# Minister okays college merger

**Eleanor Radford**

@EleanorRadford

The troubled merger of two colleges in the Midlands has been given the nod of approval by Skills Minister Matthew Hancock, who had told them to take the plans back to the drawing board.

Proposals by Stourbridge and Birmingham Metropolitan to form "one of the largest and most significant further education providers in the country" were approved by governors last week.

They are now set to become one institution with the 12,500-student Stourbridge College dissolving and its property, rights and liabilities transferring to Birmingham Met, which had more than 26,000 learners two years ago.

But the proposals had been investigated by Mr Hancock's officials at the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) to "establish if appropriate processes have been followed".

He wrote to David Beasley, clerk at Stourbridge College, saying: "I would request that

the corporation review its processes and rectify any shortfall."

However, a BIS spokesperson said there had been a constructive response to the letter and that the merger now had the minister's blessing.

"Stourbridge Corporation has responded constructively to our concerns by demonstrating why it considers the merger to be the best option for learners, local employers and the community," said the spokesperson.

"The corporation has now gone through the proper process and undertaken a college structure and prospects appraisal as set out in New Challenges, New Chances.

"We will continue to work with colleges in meeting expectations on the necessary steps when considering major changes like this to their delivery model."

A spokesperson for the colleges said: "Both corporations have worked closely with BIS outlining the rationale for the merger and the many benefits it will bring to local learners, employers and the wider community."

"All the requirements have been met and we are now looking forward to delivering

education and training to serve the needs of our communities."

The merger plan was put out to a six-week formal consultation that ended on February 27.

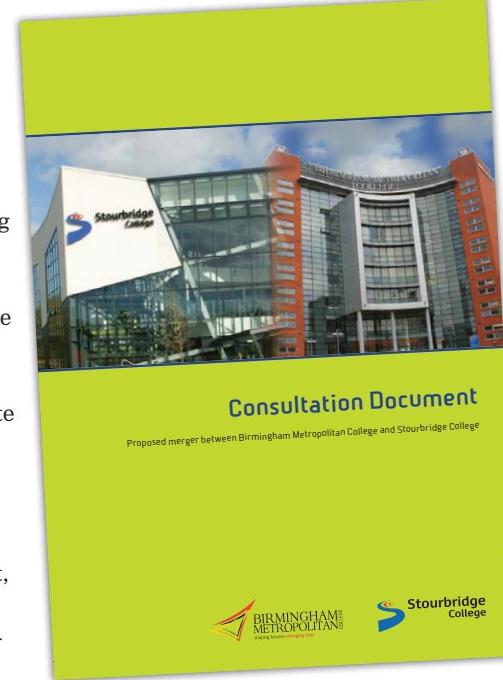
It has been backed by the Birmingham Local Enterprise Partnership and, following the governors' green light, is now set to be complete by June.

David Nolan, chair of Stourbridge College Corporation, said that the college's governors unanimously supported the merger after considering the benefits it would create for learners, including greater choice of courses, improved facilities and enhanced connections to employers and the jobs market.

Vij Randeniya, chair of Birmingham Met, said that it was "delighted" to be merging with Stourbridge College which had a reputation for success and innovation.

"Working together will help both colleges respond to government's priorities, particularly in light of the current economic climate and the need to develop the skills of our regional workforce.

"Our partnership will offer us the excit-



ing prospect of developing our curriculum across our network of campuses, as well as delivering a host of new opportunities for both organisations to build on the quality and innovation they are already known for."

## K College up for sale after 'failed merger'

**Rebecca Cooney**

@RebeccaKCooney



Providers have been invited to open days to find out about taking on the business of a struggling college being broken up following a "failed merger".

Two events will be held at K College, in Kent, for organisations looking to take over its provision.

The possible break-up of provision comes after the college, which was formed of a merger between West Kent College and South Kent College in 2010, ran into debts of £6m and was issued with a notice of concern by the Skills Funding Agency.

The college's interim principal, Phil Frier (pictured), later conceded the merger hadn't worked and proposed splitting the college in two.

He suggested one half should incorporate the Dover and Folkestone campuses, while the other comprised Ashford, Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells.

The proposal was approved by Skills Minister Matthew Hancock after an independent review which took into account the needs of the area K College serves.

The agency said two open days had been organised for providers to find out more about taking on the college business.

Two of the college's five campuses will host

the open days, with the first at the college's Tonbridge site on May 22 before a second event at its Folkestone site the following day.

An agency spokesperson said: "Along with the Education Funding Agency, we are looking to commission education and training provision currently delivered by K College across its five campuses.

"This is an opportunity for interested parties to find out more about the commissioning process and attend a Q&A session."

They added: "The Higher Education Funding Council for England will also be inviting tenders for the College's higher education provision."

The college, which was given a grade three in an Ofsted inspection last year, is still recruiting for the next academic year, starting in September and will continue to offer courses offered in line with the college plan until July next year, subject to learner numbers.

Mr Frier, who took over after the college's previous principal Bill Fearnon resigned in January, declined to comment.

A prospectus providing more information about the college's provision would be published before the open days.

Email [kopenday@skillsfundingagencybis.gov.uk](mailto:kopenday@skillsfundingagencybis.gov.uk) for more details.

## Lord Lingfield heads chartered status panel

**Eleanor Radford**

@EleanorRadford

Further education bosses have welcomed the appointment of Lord Lingfield (pictured) as chair of the group that will give out chartered status, a new quality indicator for the sector.

Skills Minister Matthew Hancock asked the Tory peer to take on the role as he had the "right background and expertise", the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) told *FE Week*.

Lord Lingfield will now put together a panel before the summer recess, in time for a formal launch in November.

Providers will put themselves forward for chartered status, which will be awarded for the first time in the early part of next year. If providers met certain criteria, such as showing strong leadership and management, and having excellent feedback from learners as well as a programme of community activity endorsed by local enterprise partnerships, they could use the status in their titles.

A BIS spokesperson said: "Ministers want to put chartered status on a long term, independent footing as soon as possible and are appointing the chair and panel members directly."

"This is consistent with views expressed in response to a consultation on the matter."

He added that the positions of chair and the rest of the panel would be unpaid.

Lord Lingfield sits on the EU sub committee for home affairs, health and education. He is also pro-chancellor of Brunel University, dep-



uty lieutenant of Greater London and chairs a range of organisations, including the Centre for Education Management (now CEFM).

He previously served as director-general of St John Ambulance and chaired the Grant-Maintained Schools Centre throughout the 1990s.

Last year he wrote an independent review on professionalism in FE at the request of former Skills Minister John Hayes. His report explored how to "raise the status of further education professionals" and ultimately resulted in the creation of the FE Guild, currently being developed to set professional standards across the sector.

Lynne Sedgmore of the 157 Group, described the new chair as a "significant champion" of the "quality and excellence of colleges".

She said: "We welcome the appointment. Lord Lingfield is someone who has spent time understanding and supporting the work of FE colleges and our sector."

"He has already made a compelling case for greater professional autonomy for FE," she added.

The Association of Colleges' deputy chief executive, Gill Clipson, said the group "looked forward" to working with Lord Lingfield in developing chartered status for colleges.

"This work will build on his recommendations in last year's report on professionalism within FE and, in this context, we will be interested to see how the charter will relate to his other recommendations concerning the establishment of a guild and the role of inspection within FE," she said.

## Editor's comment

### Rewarding failure

It has been 21 months since the first Elmfield adult retail apprentice leaver in the 2011/12 academic year, and we now know less than half achieved their framework.

Let's look at the scale of this failure for all its apprentices.

In total, Elmfield had 22,290 leavers with an average success rate of 58.5 per cent, representing six percent of the England's total 360,930 leavers (who had an average rate of 73.8 per cent).

Statistically, this means Elmfield alone dragged England's overall apprenticeship national success rate down by a full percentage point.

For a provider which has said it receives all of its money from the government, you would think failure on this scale would not be rewarded.

But in the 2010/11 financial year the directors of Elmfield drew pre-tax dividends of £6.5m on a £34m turnover, and Ged Syddall, chief executive and majority shareholder, saw his salary more than quadruple to £408,000 for 2011/12.

Unsurprisingly, Adrian Bailey MP, like the rest of us, would like to know how the Skills Funding Agency and Ofsted allowed this to happen — and what they intend to do about it.

It's time for the agency to get tough and limit the public money it allows provider shareholders to receive.

**Nick Linford, editor**

## Correction

Back in March we covered the selection of the UK team that would be competing at WorldSkills.

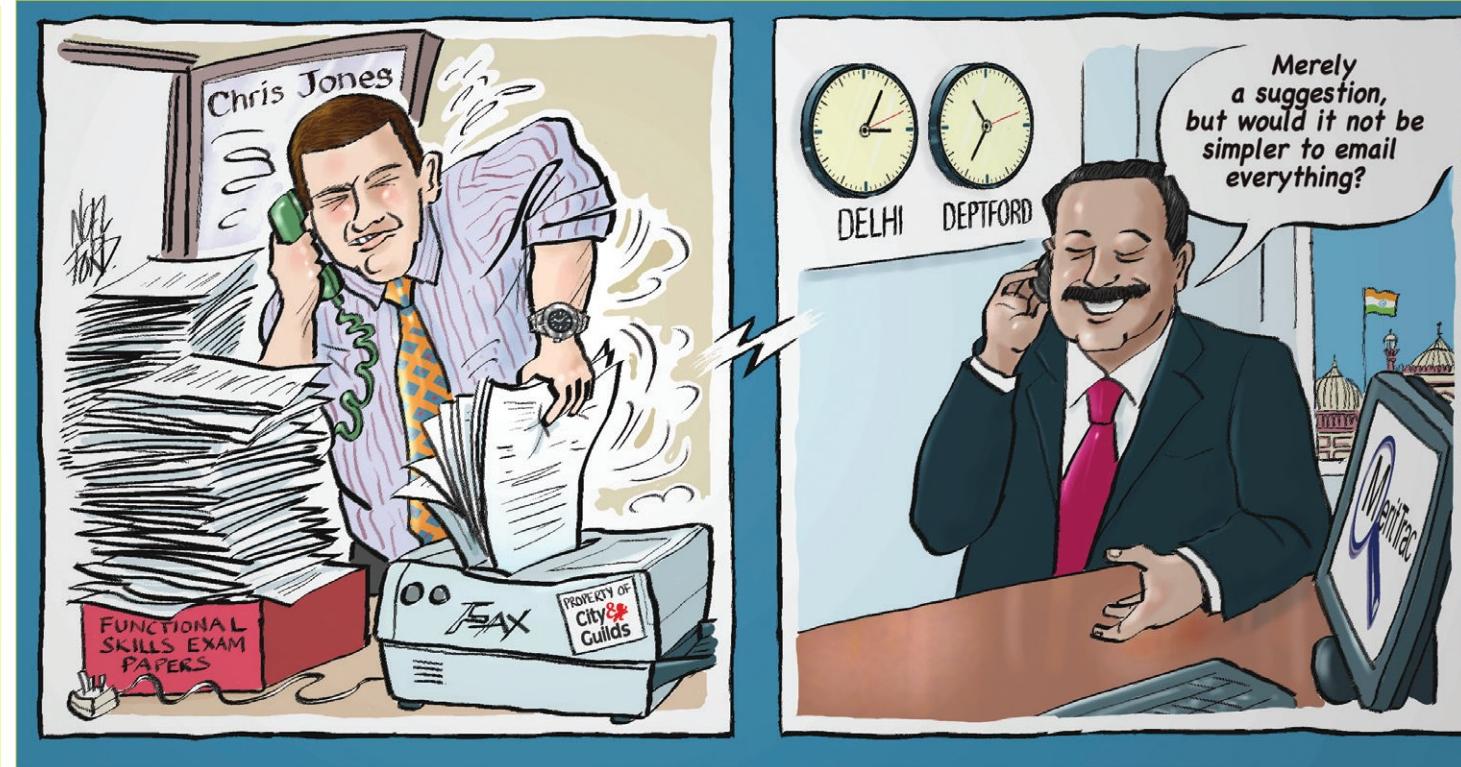
More than 30 youngsters will be travelling to Leipzig, Germany, in July to take on the world's best in vocational skills such as beauty therapy and joinery. Our coverage named much of the UK team.

But the information was supplied to us and contained two errors that have been flagged up to us.

Central College Nottingham was referred to as Central Nottingham College, and just last week we were told that Salford City College had been called Salford College.

**Have you spotted something wrong with this edition of FE Week?**

If so, feel free to tell us about it, including the page number and story headline, and explain what the problem is. Email us at news@feweek.co.uk with Corrections in the subject line.



## Exam papers to be marked in India

*Eleanor Radford*

*@EleanorRadford*

A leading FE awarding body's decision to send exam papers to India to be marked could hit standards, Unison's head of colleges has warned.

Christine Lewis questioned City & Guilds' plans to scan and then electronically send thousands of functional skills papers abroad.

"It is sad if this initiative is about using cheap labour, at the risk of compromising standards," she said.

She further questioned whether, at a time of high unemployment, there was "another solution" and if the problem stemmed from a lack of markers in the UK.

However, Chris Jones, chief executive of City & Guilds, defended the move, saying it wasn't a "money-saving exercise", but about meeting the "quick turnaround" that functional skills demanded.

"This is about reliability and integrity of the service," he said, adding however that City & Guilds had invested a "substantial" amount in India and hoped for "cost-savings" it could "pass on to its customers".

He said the firm currently charged around £13.50 per assessment, which covered commissioning test authors through to printing, loading, distributing and marking, quality assurance and integrity of results and certification.

It is understood to be the first time FE papers have been marked abroad and two other large awarding organisations told *FE Week* they had no plans to follow suit.

Exams watchdog Ofqual said the move hadn't breached any rules, but said it was monitoring the situation.

"Our focus is on the quality of the marking, not the location where it takes place," said a spokesperson.

She added: "But we will be keeping an eye on things to make sure."

Meanwhile, a spokesperson for the Association of School and College Leaders said the move presented "yet more evidence" that the testing system was "overloaded".

City & Guilds' exam papers will be sent to MeriTrac, which claims to be the largest testing and assessment company in India.

The papers would only be for tests with a "low level of subjectivity and...a very clearly defined marking scheme," Mr Jones told *FE*

*Week*. They represented around 2.8 per cent of City & Guilds' total number of exam papers, he added.

An 18-month pilot showed the company had "a far higher level of integrity in terms of marker pool, and the same levels of reliability in terms of marking and quality assurance, than we would naturally be able to achieve in the UK", said Mr Jones.

Learners sat functional skills papers all-year round, he said, which resulted in high volumes of marking at times such as Easter when contracted markers in the UK — teachers and retired teachers — were often unavailable.

"The Ministry of Defence can't send anyone to Afghanistan unless they have their functional skills; we have to be able to turn these results round in a couple of days," said Mr Jones.

Around 220 Indian teachers now acted as markers, all of them trained by City & Guilds' chief examiners over two weeks in the Asian sub-continent, he said.

Mr Jones added the company had retained 75 of its 167 contracted UK assessors for functional skills and was looking at other work opportunities for those who might lose out on contracted work.

## Comment

### Principal defiant after Ofsted grade four

[See p5 opposite for more]

I worked there for many years. Most of the staff work very, very hard and try their best to help young people who often have chaotic lives and poor literacy and numeracy skills. Many adult learners also turn their lives around with courses on offer there. My support and sympathy goes out to the teachers at the 'coal face' in the college. I know the pressures they will have been under prior to inspections and my guess now is that it's probably unbearable.

Pat

Perhaps not the time for defiance  
@MesmaUK

### Colleges' troubled merger plan goes ahead

Really surprised by this given the strength of minister @matthancockmp letter. Gov satisfied or powerless to act?  
@mikehopkinsmc

### Fears eased on funding

@AELPUK secures in-year growth funding from EFA [Education Funding Agency] for 2013-14 to reward good performers  
@AELPUK

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# Governor backs defiant Taylor

## 'It's a comfort to be asked to stay on,' says Coventry principal

**Chris Henwood**

@Chris\_Henwood

The chair of City College Coventry's board of governors has refused to sack his principal after a disastrous inspection result.

The college was branded inadequate — a grade four result — across each of the education watchdog's headline fields.

The 8,000-learner college was also given grade fours throughout the main findings board, including apprenticeships and 19+ learning programmes.

It was the college's third poor inspection result under the 16-year leadership of Paul Taylor

And the result has prompted a number of comments on websites, including *FE Week*, questioning college leadership.

Jayne Stigger wrote on Twitter: "Investigation into how this has been allowed to continue needed? How many more?"

But Warwick Hall (pictured), chair of the governors at City College Coventry since 2001, said he wanted to turn the college around "rather than debate individuals".

"The Ofsted report was extremely disappointing and it is important for our students, local businesses and the city that the provision of the college is radically improved," he said.

"Rather than debating individuals, the energies of the leadership team and board of governors are focused on delivering a considerable step change that is focused on the achievement of our current students and the new intake in September."

"The college leadership team aims to achieve this through a thorough review of systems, processes and standards, and improving the performance of all staff."

Coventry's Ofsted report, published on April 23 following inspection in March, was critical of below average achievement, low course completion, poor attendance and punctuality.

Its highest mark was a single grade two for teaching, learning and assessment on independent living and life skills.

The report said: "Quality assurance systems

are ineffective. They have failed to prevent the decline in success rates and have not brought about the necessary improvements across the college, particularly in teaching, learning and assessment."

It added: "Leadership and management throughout the college are not effective in bringing about sustained improvement in all areas."

The college has automatically been issued with a notice of concern, which a Skills Funding Agency spokesperson said required it "to take swift, robust and effective action to remedy the inadequacies identified by Ofsted".

A spokesperson for the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, said: "The government published the enhanced intervention approach in April's Rigour and Responsiveness in Skills.

"This new process will be in place by August 2013 once the appointment of the new FE Commissioner is completed.

"Before these arrangements are in place the Skills Funding Agency is leading the intervention with City College Coventry and all options have been considered."

Mr Taylor himself has responded on the *FE Week* website (right), where he said he expected the new FE Commissioner to step in somehow. However, he has already said he wanted to stay in post to "put things right".

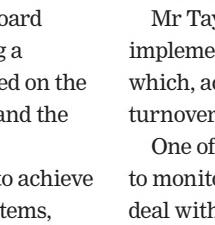
Mr Taylor has already said he was implementing changes to improve the college, which, according to agency figures, had a turnover of £19.8m last year.

One of Mr Taylor's changes — a new system to monitor attendance and trigger action to deal with students who did not turn up — was not in place in time for the inspection, he said.

Staff training would also be assessed and addressed, "before the end of June with a view to a clean start in September", he added.

"Generally, we need to tidy up on all our systems and become more consistent and focused.

"But we don't just want to implement an action plan — we want to put in place a significant culture change."



The article [in the last edition of *FE Week*] portrays me as being 'defiant'.

I am not being stubborn in staying on, rather, the corporation decided to assume a corporate responsibility for the poor outcome and has taken the pragmatic view that things need sorting out very quickly and that in order to do this, I and the rest of executive should stay in place to develop and to have implemented an action plan by the beginning of July to set the place up for September.

This is what we are doing and we have made very good progress. Indeed, some key issues were already being resolved prior to inspection in relation to personnel, structures and systems.

The governance and management team recognises the immediate challenges and is confident of significant improvement. My future is not in my hands. We have the first formal post inspection action plan monitoring meeting scheduled with the agency in mid-May.

Otherwise, we expect intervention from the new commissioner with whatever consequences that might bring. To repeat, I am not being stubborn or unrealistic about my future prospects of remaining principal.

I am doing what the corporation has asked. I am doing it and will continue to do so as professionally as I possibly can and for as long as I am required.

This will be of comfort to me when my career as principal is over.

*Paul Taylor, principal of City College Coventry*

[Visit [feweek.co.uk](http://feweek.co.uk) to see more of Mr Taylor's comments]



David Kershaw, Coventry City Council's cabinet member for education, said: "We are in discussions with colleagues at the Skills Funding Agency to support the college in any way that's appropriate."



A spokesperson for Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership said: "We work with stakeholders, including colleges, throughout the area to develop further education provision for students in Coventry and Warwickshire and our work is on-going."



Coventry South MP Jim Cunningham, Labour, said: "The principal is currently preparing proposals to deal with the situation."

"After six months these will be evaluated to see what progress has been made. Therefore, there is not much more that can be said at this stage, but I will be closely monitoring the situation as it develops."



Norman Crowther, from the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL), said: "ATL and its leadership arm, AMiE [Association of Managers in Education], are aware of the concerns at the college."

"We will work with the management to find a way to help create and support high quality teaching and a great learning environment for students and staff."



Coventry North East MP Bob Ainsworth and Coventry North West MP Geoffrey Robinson, both Labour, declined to comment.



Anthony Bravo @Anthonybravo

If we got a grade 4 I don't think I would be in post for long.  
Our governors are robust, rigorous and relentless!!



Shane Chowen @shanechowen

I'm not sure how the governors of City College Coventry could be anything other than embarrassed by this



Adrian Hutchinson @adyhutchinson

Surely can't be allowed to continue sleepwalking onto another inadequate grade?

## FE Week profile

# David Frost ~ his story

**Eleanor Radford**  
@EleanorRadford

## The chair of the Local Enterprise Partnership Network talks to FE Week

**D**avid Frost has waged war in two major financial battles — and come out fighting.

The economist watched the recession of the early 1980s “decimate” UK manufacturing and the 2008 economic downturn spawn banking breakdown, two crises that arguably defined his career.

Through 1981 and 82, Newcastle-born Frost became known as a troubleshooter as he merged chambers of commerce up and down the country. He built up training programmes to help scupper youth unemployment and by 2007, and then director general of the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC), signposted the Bank of England to the next recession.

“The recession in the early Eighties made today look like a kid’s tea-party,” the 59-year-old recalls.

“Manufacturing was decimated and for a year there were major closures — 3,000 redundancies, 5,000 redundancies — every week. The atmosphere was very difficult and youth unemployment soared.”

But a training operation was born during the economic turmoil, planting a strong resolve in the father-of-two to help to prepare young people for the world of work and bridge the skills gap.

“Training boards were set up and I used one in the West Midlands as the nucleus to build a big training company called PTP — Performance Through People — which is still there,” he says.

“It was one of the first times these kind of companies and training opportunities had happened. Young people were learning textiles, engineering, business administration, enabling them to get their first job.”

“It gave me knowledge for life — that we need to deal with youth unemployment.”

Even after a successful career in which he travelled the globe as a member of government delegations representing the interests of 100,000 British businesses, it is youth unemployment that has resonated with him most.

“From the day I started my working life to the day I finished, the big cry from employers was that schools were not equipping young people with the skills they needed for the modern world,” says Frost, who now lives in Sutton Coldfield.

“The message is still out there now.”

“Having young people without skills just stores up big problems for the future — my interest was to give them skills.”

Frost now acts as chair for vInspired, a charity dedicated to volunteering opportunities for young people, the Studio Schools Trust, which helps to develop skills, and the National Centre for Entrepreneurship in Education.

The keen motorcyclist, who’s travelled much of Europe “in the comfort of his leathers”, says that attending a technical school in

Northumberland had a “huge impact” on him.

“People were boxed as either vocational or academic, but I feel many — including me — were both,” he says.

“I can strip an engine blind, I can weld and I can use a lathe. But I’m not unusual, many of my friends are the same. The practical experience of hands-on work has served me well throughout life — that’s why I’m a huge fan of university technical colleges.”

Frost, who met his wife Mari while studying political economy at Thames Polytechnic in the 1970s, started out as an economist in London.

After moving to Walsall Chamber of Commerce, he quickly rose through the ranks to become, at 33, the organisation’s youngest chief executive.

He took the lead in merging the chamber with others in the area to form East Mercia Chamber of Commerce, before moving on in 2000 to another chamber; in Coventry and Warwickshire.

After seeing the organisation through much change — such as the coming and going of local employer networks, training and enterprise councils and the Learning and Skills Council — Frost was invited to London to help to restructure the BCC.

He was soon asked to “put his hat in the ring” and apply to become the organisation’s next general director. He then spent the next nine years building up the BCC as a “powerful brand”, visiting countries, from Malaysia to Mexico and the United States to South Africa. But he says that his “highlight” was a trip to China with Peter Mandelson.

“We were in the Great Hall of the People with the Chinese premier. Just seeing how effective Mandelson was at promoting the interests of British producers was staggering,” he remembers.

“He was confident, at ease, not overawed — just very, very good.”

Frost also travelled the UK, talking to businesses to find out what issues they were facing.

“Essentially we were able to call the recession in 2007,” he says.

“Going round the country it was quite clear that the whole of bank lending had ground to a halt.

“It was having a great impact — long established family businesses were having



issues with lending as credit was glued up.

“I was a lone voice saying ‘this economy is going into meltdown’ and others were saying ‘no, it’s not as bad as it looks’,” he says.

“I remember being called into the Bank of England and to talk to members of the Monetary Policy Committee and going through statistics — the scale of the work we were doing became clear.”

He says the chamber’s main role was then to make businesses aware of the looming troubles and to help them to prepare, giving advice, for example, on cash flow.

“People were more prepared and not so many businesses failed as in previous recessions,” he says.

When he stepped down in 2011, he took on the role of chairing the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEPs) Network.

The 39 partnerships have changed dramatically in the past 19 months since they started, he says.

“The government is determined to get

growth and realises it can’t do everything from Whitehall. It wants to see more devolution,” says Frost.

“The link with FE will vary from one part of the country to the other but at the end of the day, LEPs must have a clear understanding of what’s happening with the labour market in their area, and ensure provisions will be there for young people.

“Companies are looking to expand but people haven’t got the skills to do it, so they should act as the body that has an understanding of what’s happening in the labour market.

“They will be important in transferring how companies are thinking in the next three to five years and working with providers to ensure provisions are there.”

Are their increased powers a good thing?  
“Absolutely,” he says.

“I don’t think it’ll be easy — the centre will have to let go and provide a single pot of money and give freedoms, but at the same time LEPs will have to step up to the plate and really show how they can make a difference.”

“Some will succeed. But just because some don’t perform well doesn’t mean that LEPs are a failure — that’s just localism. You’ve got to let things flourish. If it’s evident some are failing we should be looking at the quality of the leadership on the boards and act upon it.”

What has driven the engineer’s son who was awarded the CBE in 2011 for services to business?

“I have always believed in hard work and a can-do attitude,” he admits.

“Perhaps it’s the Geordie in me, but I live to work. I have never had a day where I thought I didn’t want to go to work, ever.”

“You’re only on the planet once, so don’t waste it.”

## It's a personal thing

### What's your favourite book?

Birdsong by Sebastian Faulks

### What did you want to be when you were younger?

A fighter pilot

### What do you do to switch off from work?

Cycling and motorcycling are the best therapy — however, I’m not sure you ever switch off completely. I always think life is like riding a bicycle — stop pedalling and you fall off

### If you could invite anyone to a dinner party, living or dead, who would it be?

Sir Bradley Wiggins, Dame Ellen MacArthur, Robert Stephenson [19th century railway engineer] and Lord Dearing [author of a government review into higher education]

### What would your super power be?

Changing my birth date, ideally to 1815 — when Britain was becoming a huge manufacturing superpower; and place of innovations and new technology like the railways. It must have been incredibly exciting.

## FE Week Experts

# Tutors are more than an 'expensive luxury'

New national occupational standards for personal tutoring will help to raise standards across the sector, writes Sally Wootton

The learning and skills sector has long supported the idea that personal tutoring contributes to improved retention and achievement, with a great deal of research suggesting that it lies at the heart of every learner's experience and is central to his or her achievement and progression.

So why is the role of the personal tutor still often under-resourced and undervalued?

Many see tutors as an expensive luxury; they are often the first to go when savings need to be made. But reducing the level of tutoring is a false economy considering the role it plays in identifying learners at risk, implementing early interventions and supporting learners to keep on track.

And lost learners mean lost income. That aside, remember that when we recruit learners we are making a commitment to serve them well — good tutoring is part of that service.

Being a tutor is a complex role but it is one that contributes to retention, achievement and progression. Tutors monitor progress; identify barriers to learning and enable learners to become motivated, autonomous self-starters; to develop essential wider skills

so that they are well equipped to succeed.

The difficulty is finding evidence to show the impact of this complex role. It has been said that where learners succeed, it is down to good teaching; where they fail, it is down to poor tutoring.

**"Many case studies have found that poor tutoring can have a negative impact on a learner's mental wellbeing"**

More work needs to explore and develop methods to assess the impact of tutoring, not simply to validate the contribution that it makes but also to provide a tool for self evaluation and quality improvement.

There's the assumption too that 'anyone can do it'. Tutoring is a learning relationship that requires specific skills and attributes. A negative tutoring relationship — that is, one that does not engage fully with the learner — hinders an individual's potential.

Plus, many case studies have found that poor tutoring can have a negative impact on a learner's mental wellbeing. The right people must be in place to encourage, support and challenge learners.

Sadly, many organisations still allocate tutoring on the basis of timetables and availability, rather than an ability to do the job effectively.

Historically, little guidance has been available to support the effective recruitment and development of skilled personal tutors. This has led to a disparate quality of provision across the sector and, in many cases, across individual organisations.

The Further Education Tutorial Network (FETN) is addressing these issues through research, training and resource development, and has recently worked with the Learning and Skills Improvement Service to develop national occupational standards for personal tutoring.

These standards identify the requisite skills, knowledge and understanding, and are applicable to FE and sixth-form colleges, higher education and work-based learning. The new standards clarify the tutoring role, bringing it in line with other professional occupations such as mentoring, coaching and counselling.

The standards can be used as a benchmark



for effective tutoring practice and as a tool to review policy and procedures for recruiting, training and supporting personal tutors. They are available on the free resources page of the FETN website.

*Dr Sally Wootton, founding director of the Further Education Tutorial Network*

# We need to talk about the Tech Bacc

policy circles and accountability measures, there is an urgent need for equal status to be given to high-quality vocational education. Employers are crying out for candidates with real potential to go into higher level apprenticeships or employment-based training that then lead into a range of careers in industry and commerce. In many cases the best preparation for these is highly valued and high status vocational courses.

However, the Tech Bacc does not address two major issues.

The first is the continuing misuse of the term 'baccalaureate'. The simple fact is that Tech Bacc, like the Ebacc before it, is not a baccalaureate. It is a performance indicator based on courses that in large part have not yet been approved. And we all know too well what happens when the curriculum is driven by the accountability system as opposed to a coherent educational vision: it places the accountability cart before the educational horse.

Curriculum design focuses on ticking the box on the performance indicator as opposed to looking at the learning outcomes. We should be starting this process with a planned approach to the curriculum that integrates vocational and academic qualifications into a coherent educational vision.

The second issue is even more challenging, and at its heart is a cultural issue that our country has been deeply unsuccessful in addressing. The regrettable fact is that a separate performance indicator for voca-

tional courses perpetuates the idea that these routes are in some way inferior to academic ones, that the 'brightest' students should opt for a traditional academic route and that this alternative will be for 'the other 50 per cent'.

We have to break that mindset.

Recent research by the Education and Employers Task Force highlighted the immense mismatch between the career aspirations of young people and employment opportunities. There is no doubt that there are many highly skilled career routes in areas such as construction, technology and engineering that struggle to recruit appropriately skilled and qualified employees.

**"A planned approach to the curriculum should integrate vocational and academic qualifications"**

range of routes including ones that build on level two qualifications.

So, for example, a student could achieve this baccalaureate by studying three A-levels, with a core such as the one that has been proposed.

Another student could achieve it through high-quality vocational qualifications in place of the A-levels and others could achieve it through a combination. This way we would not be forcing young people down a route that continues to be separate.

But there is a further element to this. Employers continuously and quite understandably argue for young people to possess a more rounded range of employability skills. The CBI report, First Steps, defines these clearly. Whatever route young people are following, these skills need to be embedded into the curriculum and other learning experiences throughout their education.

My assessment of the Tech Bacc proposal is therefore to welcome that it has taken the debate a little way forward but to call urgently on the government to engage in much more detailed discussion with those of us who represent the FE and school sectors, along with employers. We must ensure that the approved, yet to be announced, qualifications have genuine currency and channel and motivate our best students towards high status careers.

*Brian Lightman, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders*



The government's plans for vocational education move the debate forward but more detailed discussions with employers, and FE and school sector representatives are vital, says Brian Lightman

After what has felt like an incredibly long wait, there is some sense of relief that the government has finally given an indication of its plans for vocational education with its announcement of a Technical Baccalaureate (Tech Bacc).

At a time when there has been so much emphasis on traditional academic study in

Part of the solution therefore must be to turn this performance indicator, together with other level three routes such as A-level, into a proper baccalaureate — an overarching certificate that carries the credibility of UCAS points and can be achieved through a

# We give them bayonets. Why not the vote?



**FE INSIDER | Ben Nicholls  
@bnichollsuk**

**Former House of Commons Education Select Committee specialist Ben Nicholls is head of policy at London's Newham College. He writes exclusively for FE Week, every month.**

**H**e leans forward and looks me in the eyes. "But is it something the government is actually serious about? Or is it just something they talk about to try and sound popular with young people?"

The scene is a student council meeting at our Stratford campus; the overwhelming smell is of pizza; the question is a good one.

For a long time, the corridors of power have hummed with giving 16 and 17-year-olds the vote. But when I seek out students' views, I soon realise that many of them think that it's all about political posturing and popularity.

Things did move on a little when MPs supported Stephen Williams, Lib Dem MP for Bristol and a long-time champion of the cause, when he brought his Voting Age (Reduction to 16) Bill before the Commons in January. However, his Bill collapsed because it didn't finish its passage by the end of the Parliamentary session. Meanwhile, in Scotland, 16 and 17-year-olds have been guaranteed a say in the independence referendum, scheduled for September next year.

The Stratford students' ages offer little predictor of their views: several, mature and young, say that 16 is nowhere near mature enough to understand or participate in elections, while others, again from both camps, disagree. Concerns arise about undue influence from parents or friends; for others it is an issue of basic civil liberties: "I probably wouldn't actually vote," says one 16-year-old, "but I should be given the chance."

But the strongest argument comes when we discuss what else 16 and 17-year-olds can do. The list is long and ranges from working

and paying tax, to having sex and getting married, to riding a moped and possessing (though not purchasing) cigarettes. While there's an acknowledgement that some 16-year-olds may not be mature enough to vote, there's a consensus that it's pretty bizarre to set it higher than the age at which you can, say, join the armed forces.

For my part, I think patronising young people is a pretty good way to irritate them and switch them off — and asking them to work and pay tax but not give them a stake in the governance of their country seems pretty patronising to me.

For the past ten years, it's been a huge privilege to be the founding chair of RicNic, a youth theatre group that allows young people to put on shows in professional theatres with a minimum of adult supervision (and without paying to participate). The basic ethos is that, if young people are trusted to marry and motorbike and march, they should probably be trusted to choreograph West Side Story too.

For this reason, and for the many excellent reasons put forth by the student councillors, the whole thing's a no-brainer for me. What better way, if we really want to engage young people in politics (and, perhaps more importantly, in policy), than ask them what

they think in a meaningful and tangible way at the ballot box?

Furthermore, giving young people a say in the issues that affect them might also result in some better policy-making. Would the Tories have been so quick to force through the abolition of the education maintenance allowance if they'd have needed the votes of those who received it? Would the Lib Dems have reneged on their promise to scrap tuition fees, and would Labour have been so eager to saddle the next generation with mountains of debt?

Perhaps, knowing as we do in the world of FE how impressive young people can be, this is a policy issue that lots of us — and our students — could really get behind. If, as Vernon Bogdanor has suggested, lowering the voting age could "reignite the interest of the young in politics", it would surely be worth doing.

If we're willing for our young people to be given benefits and bayonets, it seems fair to give them a cross in a box as well.

*Ben Nicholls*

## FE Week Experts



# Skills are an essential part of any regional growth agenda

ing the partnerships' ability to drive local growth.

While the government has provided some funding and helped with denominating local enterprise zones within some, too many LEPs are still dependent on local authorities for support, contradicting the rationale behind their creation. And as regional growth fund bids are often carried out independently of LEPs, their roles are often reduced to essentially that of advisers not drivers.

A positive development has been good working relationships between local authorities and some partnerships. They need each other, and the LEP structure — with representatives from BIS — can provide a valuable forum for mutual understanding and support.

The committee sees a valuable role for FE on LEPs. Skills are an essential part of any regional growth agenda. In theory, a local board comprising business representatives alongside public sector representatives, including those from the higher education and FE sectors, should be an ideal base for developing a skills agenda to match local skills needs.

To date, progress has been variable.

It is not always clear that LEP business members represent all businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises. Direct FE representation is also rare, something

that concerns the Association of Colleges, which feels that the potential contribution from the sector is unrecognised.

Help is at hand. To the rescue of LEPs rides the champion of regional growth, Lord Heseltine. His report, No Stone Unturned, advocates that various funding pots from different departments be pooled to provide LEPs with a £58bn boost.

While different government departments are reported as digging their heels in, the Chancellor has committed himself to backing this recommendation.

The Treasury usually wins these battles, but how committed are his officials to fighting this battle over and above planned cuts? Only time will tell.

Potentially, LEPs have gone from minor players with a begging bowl to key regional drivers armed with transformational resources.

Lord Heseltine himself acknowledged that many LEPs are not currently in a position to handle this money. Logically they must prove themselves before being entrusted to this level of taxpayer funding.

This is where the recommendations of the select committee are relevant, particularly with regard to skills and the FE sector.

If LEPs are to receive more funding there has to be a way of measuring their impact

locally. They must demonstrate a working relationship with appropriate local education providers at all levels, including FE.

The committee decided it did not want to be too prescriptive over representation at board level, conscious that representation alone does not guarantee delivery and that alternative models of engagement might work.

What is important is that whatever approach is used, LEPs should be able to demonstrate that skills levels are improving and that the needs of business are being met.

LEPs should also be the responsibility of one minister in one department empowered to demand best practice from LEPs and the capacity to demonstrate it to others.

There is an increasing awareness in government that economic success must be built on a close relationship between education and business.

FE has a vital role here as regional economic growth will come from developing regional educational and business eco-systems.

The Heseltine/LEP strategy has the vision to do this. The issue is whether the LEPs can grasp the opportunity. My committee report points the way. Will the government and LEPs follow?

*Adrian Bailey MP, chair of the Business, Innovation and Skills Select Committee*

If local enterprise partnerships are to receive more funding, there has to be a way of measuring their impact locally. And they must demonstrate a working relationship with local education providers at all levels, including FE, says Adrian Bailey

The Business, Innovation and Skills Select Committee has just completed its second report into local enterprise partnerships (LEPs).

Our first report, published in 2010, pointed to a lack of funding, understanding of their role and how they would impact on a variety of small organisations. Eighteen months on and these are still major obstacles inhibit-

**FE Week Experts**

# Coming back from a grade four blow

No one wants to be labelled inadequate by Ofsted, says Lynn Merilion, who describes the journey to improvement after it happened to her college earlier this year

The days when Ofsted gave colleges three weeks to prepare for an inspection are long gone.

This time round, we got a phone call on the Thursday of February half term — and the inspectors arrived the next Monday. This posed several challenges, including getting in touch with staff on leave.

When I joined the college (a few months before the inspection) I took time to talk to staff, learners, parents and other stakeholders, discussing with them the college's strengths and areas for improvement.

The trends were not positive and, although there had been improvements, the major success data was below national rates. This was always going to make the college vulnerable, but as the inspectors say in their report, we were on our way to addressing issues arising from the data.

Before Ofsted, for instance, we were evaluating the management structure and its effectiveness in driving up the quality of teaching, learning and achievement. Now we are implementing a structure focused on student achievements.

While there are no quick fixes, some of the issues are straightforward, such as how we

develop learners' English and maths skills, an area found weak by the inspectors.

We have now set up a 'buddy system' for teachers with strong English skills to offer support to others who need it.

**"We have been very clear that we take ownership of the grade and about the further improvements that we need to make"**

Of course, for teachers to become outstanding they need to know what outstanding looks like. That's why our grade one teachers are now sharing best practice with colleagues, using new technology.

We found that we had overcomplicated the delivery of equality and diversity in the classroom, and that some teaching staff didn't feel confident in this area, so we are offering training and development and, again, sharing best practice from areas where we get this right.

Notwithstanding the overall rating, there were areas where we achieved grade twos, including our work with students with learning difficulties that Ofsted said had outstanding features. It also praised our "calm and welcoming environment, culture of mutual respect and tolerance, and learners (who) behave in an appropriate fashion".

Our students, staff and partners have been very supportive, some students have even written to Ofsted to tell them of the good experiences they have had at the college.

I was concerned about the inspection's impact on staff morale and how we would communicate the result.

During inspection week I made sure that I was available to support the inspection team and to provide essential ongoing communication with the staff and governors. Staff were debriefed face-to-face at the end of the week and, shortly before the Ofsted result was publicly announced, we communicated with all our key partners including employers, sub-contractors and the media.

Our stakeholders have been overwhelmingly supportive and are keen to continue to work with us as we make improvements.

Of course the result was very disappointing — no one wants to be labelled inadequate.

But we have been very clear that we take ownership of the grade, that we had already begun to make changes before Ofsted visited and that we are very clear about the further



improvements that we need to make.

We have another 10 to 13 months before the inspectors return. Our overriding commitment is to ensure that we achieve an outstanding experience for our learners. With our staff completely behind us, I know we can do this. We won't rest until we're the best college in the country.

*Lynn Merilion, principal of City of Bristol College*

# Using technology to raise your game



Using technology across key performance indicators can help colleges to achieve greater success, says Rob Elliott

Every college wants to be successful in the quality of its provision, positive outcomes for students and, of course, long-term financial stability. And with the government's plan to appoint an FE commissioner with the power to control and close struggling institutions, all need to prove their performance is up to scratch.

The correct use of technology can boost the management of all five key performance indicators identified in last year's Learning and Skills Improvement Service report, Improving efficiency and effectiveness: a guide for colleges and providers.

To check that you are heading in the right direction, here's a brief checklist of how technology could help you to raise your game.

Academic staff utilisation: a clear picture is vital. Staff pay can represent around 70 per cent of costs within a college so you must look at the availability, skill sets and mix of teaching and support staff. Then cross-check with the structure of your curriculum, how timetables are blocked and even staff locations if you are multi-campus.

This is extraordinarily difficult to do accurately without a management information system, and yet typical staff utilisation has been known to be as low as 70 per cent.

Curriculum efficiency: the most successful colleges optimise not only the curriculum that they offer, but also the manner in which it is delivered — and that means getting to grips with two major funding methodology changes, a tidal wave of guidance and consultations, funding rates, retention factors, area cost uplifts... I could go on.

Two things can really help. First, become well-informed. Seek out those in the sector that understand the implications inside out — audit companies, independent advisers

— and pick their brains. Second, funding will always be complex, so make good use of comprehensive planning software to gather all the factors that you need to make calculations — and to take account of 'what ifs'.

**"The right technology in the right hands will assist with accurate and constant monitoring"**

Group size: it pays to know whether there are 12 or 20 students in your class. One extra student in a group could bring in up to £3,500 of extra funding without any significant increase in cost or a reduction in the quality of education.

The right technology in the right hands will assist with accurate and constant monitoring, tracking the viability of courses and allowing senior management to promptly react to in-year changes. This could be spotting common units across qualifications

and deciding to bring two small groups of students together, therefore reducing costs by 50 per cent, or quickly intervening if a course doesn't attract enough enquiries to be feasible.

Success rates by course: switched-on colleges will model different qualifications within an overall programme, with various start and finish dates. This means that if a plumbing apprentice drops out in the second term, he or she may still be able to walk away with the health and safety qualification completed in term one — good news for your success rates.

However, be careful. By definition, a model is a simplified representation of reality, so check that your management information system can model at a detailed enough level to ensure that your college is rewarded for its successes.

Support costs as percentage of income: using technology to reduce support costs can be the key to maximising resources at the chalk face.

Adopt a policy of entering data once, then reusing it many times, and your staff will save valuable time.

The result will be a far better overall experience for students — which is arguably the most important key performance indicator of all.

*Rob Elliott, UK products manager for Capita's further and higher education business*

# FE Week campus round-up

sponsored by **empra**

## Awards for outstanding adult learners



Jason Putman, 39 speaking at the City Lit student awards, while X-Files actress Gillian Anderson looks on

**D**ozens of adult learners enjoyed a touch of Hollywood glamour as they collected prizes at an annual awards bash in London.

Gillian Anderson, who played FBI special agent Dana Scully in The X-Files, handed out certificates at the City Lit ceremony.

More than 30 awards were handed over, including two special presentations to two "outstanding learners".

They went to 45-year-old Usman Choudhry, who has overcome a stammer having taken a

number of speech therapy courses, and Jason Putman, 39. He had been homeless for more than 20 years, before studying for a level two certificate supporting vulnerable people.

"My time at City Lit has given me insight and the tools to work with homeless and vulnerable people," said Jason.

Deputy principal Nick Moore said: "Every year we do these events and every year they're terrific — a real reminder of why we do what we do."

## Logo project goes with a roar



Martin Collins with his winning logo design for the Lion project

**A** graphic design student from Doncaster has created a logo for an international project aimed at disadvantaged young people.

Martin Collins, who studies level three creative graphics and media at Doncaster College, won a competition to design a logo for the Lion project, which aims to develop resources to help facilitators, trainers, public sector employees and counsellors to respond to the needs of young people not in employment, education or training.

Martin, 22, said: "I enjoyed the challenge

and thoroughly enjoyed the experience of working on a project of this size and scale."

The Lion project is led by the college, working with partners from Sweden, Germany, Hungary, France, Italy, and the Netherlands.

Aliya Sorgen, the college's international projects and partnerships lead, said: "Working with Martin was a joy. He was incredibly professional throughout the many minor changes that were requested . . . and produced a high quality logo in record time."



Derby College's winning equestrian team

## Galloping success for Derby College

**E**questrian students from Derby College won first prize at this year's annual inter-college riding competition.

The team of second-year extended diploma in horse management learners competed against six other colleges at the final in Warwickshire.

They were put through their paces in three areas: dressage, show jumping and a test of their equine knowledge.

Equine lecturer Stephanie Meadows said:

"The team did a fantastic job considering they were riding new horses supplied by the organisers, and were marked on clear rounds and style."

"Their win is testament to the skill and knowledge that they have developed during their time at Derby."

She added: "This is the first time that we have won this competition . . . it is a huge accolade for all the students and staff involved."



The Cornwall College students at the entrance of Disneyland Paris

## Tourism trip to Disneyland Paris

**A** research trip to Disneyland Paris helped a group of tourism and travel students from the South West to understand how theme parks work.

The 23 Cornwall College students looked at how the parks used branding and set prices to generate profits, and then had the chance to try out the rides and watch parades, laser displays and firework shows.

Emma White, 17, from Falmouth, who is studying level three travel and tourism, said: "We really got to see how honeypot attractions work and draw you in. It was nice to see a practical side as well as studying the theory in class."

The students also got a taste of French culture, visiting Notre Dame, the Louvre, and the Eiffel Tower.

## Want your college or training provider to appear on these pages?

Send your stories with pictures to [news@feweek.co.uk](mailto:news@feweek.co.uk) including names, ages and course of students where applicable

# 'We're doing this for the people we've lost'

**A four-storey staircase will become Mt Everest for a day this month at Canterbury College. Rebecca Cooney explains why**

A team of Canterbury College staff is planning to climb the height of Mt Everest — without leaving the college. The 13 members of the college's estate team, led by estate manager Craig Nimmo, will go up and down a four-storey staircase 737 times, which adds up to 8,848m — the height of the world's tallest mountain. The aim is to raise money for Macmillan Cancer Support.

Craig's father, David, an ex-soldier in the Gordon Highlanders, died of lung cancer aged 67.

Craig, 39, said: "My dad was looked after by Macmillan, which is our charity this year at the college ... suffering with cancer's not easy, so I thought let's do a challenge that's not easy."

The "climb", which will be completed in full mountaineering gear with backpacks, ice axes and rope, will take place on Wednesday, May 29, the 60th anniversary of the first successful ascent by Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay.

Craig's love of mountaineering gave him the idea for the challenge.

"I've been inspired by Hillary and Tenzing

— and the people before and after them — and I've been to base camp myself. I'm a bit of an Everest nut," he said.

As a teenager in the army cadets, Craig was chosen to climb Pisang peak in the Himalayas.

"I was a 17-year-old from Norfolk, which is not completely flat but hasn't really got any hills or mountains. To go from there to the Himalayas in one go blew me away — and I've been hooked ever since," he said.

Over the years, he's attempted to climb Mt Blanc, has climbed in the Alps and the Pyrenees, and still has dreams of making it to the top of Everest.

His brother Jamie went with him to Everest base camp. "My dad said to me, 'I can't come with you but I'll be in your rucksack', and luckily enough he was alive when we went," said Craig.

Despite people telling him that he was "mad" to re-create the climb on a 12m staircase, many staff were keen to take part.

Day cleaner Lyn Tomkins, 45, also lost her father to cancer. "He was supported by Macmillan and, more poignantly, his birthday was on May 29," she said.

"He passed away just three years ago and I want to do this in his memory."

Security officer Colin Davis, 34, said: "My father-in-law is suffering with prostate cancer and I'm keen to raise money for this great cause."

The conditions may not be as demanding as



FEATURED CAMPUS ROUND-UP

Craig Nimmo (front red jacket), Lyn Tomkin (in green t-shirt) and Colin Davis (back, holding the yellow umbrella) with members of the team preparing for their 'ascent'.

the real thing, but Craig and his team have been taking their training seriously.

"We'll be doing it without the view, so I think, dare I say it, it's going to be quite boring, just going up the stairs looking at our feet, however I think we all realise why we're doing it," said Craig.

"We're not doing it because it's there, as George Mallory said when he was asked why he chose to climb Everest, we're doing it for people

we've lost.

"For me, it's trying to give something back to the people who looked after my dad in his last moments and I'm sure each team member will be thinking of someone they've lost to cancer, or thinking how they can help those who suffer with cancer."

The team hope to raise at least £884.80 — 10p for every metre. Visit [www.justgiving.com/teams/canterburycollege](http://www.justgiving.com/teams/canterburycollege) to sponsor the team.

## Star grabs the mic in Middlesbrough



Amelia Lily performs at Middlesbrough College for staff and students

Middlesbrough students were given a musical treat when X Factor star Amelia Lily returned to her hometown.

Amelia, who shot to fame after appearing on The X Factor in 2011, belted out hits. You Bring Me Joy and Shut Up (And Give Me Whatever You Got), at Middlesbrough College.

The 18-year-old gave the students an insider's view of the music industry and told of recording a video in Los Angeles.

Her secret of success? "Practice is key," she told the students.

"I would practise dancing in my mum's living room every night. If you can't dance in the living room go and practise in the garden," she said.

Trevor Brewis, director of visual and performing arts at the college, said: "We grab every opportunity to inspire our students. Amelia is a credit to the town and the talent here."



Mehrak with one of her digital paintings

## Artwork on show in Monte Carlo

Artwork by a college student in London has been displayed at an exhibition in Monte Carlo organised by the former Empress of Iran.

Mehrak Davoudi, a second-year foundation degree in creative arts student at Barnet and Southgate College, donated her work to the show, as did other Iranian artists. All the exhibits will be auctioned in aid of The Prince Alireza Pahlavi fund for ancient Iran scholarship at Harvard University.

David Byrne, principal of Barnet and Southgate, said: "It's rare for one of our creative industries students to receive such critical international acclaim while still studying, but this has been the case for Mehrak. We wish her well for the future."

Mehrak, Iranian by birth, has also lived in France and Holland. Some of her work, which is influenced by Persian culture, is in the private collection of the former empress, Farah Pahlavi.

# FE Week campus round-up

sponsored by **empra**



Joanne Lumley with award winner Yan Zhang and Creative Skillset executive director Kate O'Connor

## Graduate wins 'Oscar' of tailoring

A young London tailor has won the Rising Star Silver Shears Award at the 'Oscars' of tailoring.

Yan Zhang, 22, from East Ham, who recently completed a fashion degree at Havering College of Further and Higher Education, scooped the prize at the Golden Shears Awards at the Merchant Taylors' Hall in London's Threadneedle Street.

Yan said: "I would really like a job in fashion tailoring. The course at Havering included a

major project on tailoring with our suits being showcased at Alternative Fashion Week in Spitalfields."

Yan impressed judges, including fashion entrepreneur Lloyd Johnson, fashion writer Hilary Alexander, actress Joanna Lumley, chef Raymond Blanc and The Apprentice's Nick Hewer, with her tweed jacket and pleated mini-skirt. Havering College curriculum manager for fashion Marie Loney said: "This is a fantastic achievement for Yan."



## Atlantic crossing looms for Kacey

A London music student has been accepted onto a four-year course at a prestigious American college.

Kacey Chambers, 19 and studying for a BTec extended diploma in music at City and Islington College, was persuaded by her tutor to audition for the Berklee College of Music in Boston, which counts 200 Grammy award winners amongst its alumni.

Kacey, from Tottenham, started performing in church when she was just seven.

She said: "It gave me a passion for gospel music and got me used to performing in front of big audiences from a young age."

She said that her plans for her Boston stint included building up a repertoire within two years.

"I want to be writing my own songs, gigging, and pushing myself each day."

"I want to make music that inspires, encourages and can change people's lives."

## Special visit from Kent police



From left: Michael Baker, 16, Cheniece Richmond, 17, special constable, Chris Williams, 19, Grace Cook and Matthew Wills, both 17

A team from Kent police has visited trainee special constables at MidKent college to assess how well they are preparing for their voluntary duties.

The team tested the group of public services students — all training to become volunteer police officers — on their stop-and-search techniques, and vehicle and open ground searches. Among the team of officers was former MidKent student and special constable,

Chris Williams, who, like many of the trainees, hopes to become a regular officer.

He said: "I found my time at MidKent really useful as the course gave me a real insight into the police and helped me to decide that it was the career I wanted.

"Being a special constable doesn't necessarily mean I'll make it as a regular police officer, but hopefully through training and hard work, that's what will happen."

## Staff share their favourite books



International baccalaureate student Jordan Graham, 17, displays her free book alongside college staff members and World Book Day donators Cait Orton, Melanie Jones, Patricia Nicholls and Helen Berry

Staff at a London college gave away free copies of their favourite books to mark World Book Night.

Richmond upon Thames College library staff Helen Berry, Melanie Jones and Patricia Nicholls, with Cait Orton of student services, joined 20,000 others across the UK and Ireland as nominated 'book givers' who were sent free copies of their favourite book to give away.

"World Book Night is about sharing great works of literature and giving people the

chance to read books they may not ordinarily be exposed to," said Cait.

"The students here were really keen to become involved in the scheme and I'm hopeful that they will continue to pass the books on to friends and family to enjoy in the future."

The staff chose The Eye of the Gull by Jasper Fforde, Noughts and Crosses by Malorie Blackman, The Knife of Never Letting Go by Patrick Ness and Judge Dredd: The Dark Judges by John Wagner.

## Want your college or training provider to appear on these pages?

Send your stories with pictures to news@feweek.co.uk including names, ages and course of students where applicable



Ellie Cox, 16, gives a manicure to a patient in Warwick Hospital

## A dollop of TLC in Warwickshire

**A** group of 12 hair and beauty students from Warwickshire College have been visiting Warwick Hospital to offer massages, manicures and hairstyling to patients.

The learners are working with Kissing It Better, a national charity that enables local community members to use their specialist skills to make a difference to the care of patients and carers in hospitals and care homes.

Carole Richardson, technical academy manager for hair and beauty at Warwickshire College, said: "We are thrilled with the initial success of our partnership with Kissing it Better and hope this continues for years to come."

"It's extremely rewarding to see the smiles on the patients' faces, and it's fantastic to see our students developing their skills in a very different environment."



From left: Learner mentor Martin Downey, lecturer Matt Duncalf, students Josh Turner, 17, Chris Williams, 20, Jordan Robbins, 18, and Kieran Woolrich, 19, and technician Martin Apps

## Buggy gives a lesson in life skills

**P**ractical skills students are putting together an off-road buggy to learn how motor vehicles are constructed.

The South Cheshire College entry level learners have just two weeks to learn how to read technical diagrams, use a range of different tools, and how to solve problems on their own.

Lecturer Matt Duncalf said: "This

fantastic project will enrich the students' time at the college."

The group will record their progress by producing a step-by-step construction guide that will include photos.

The course is part of a programme for students with learning difficulties and disabilities that gives them the chance to learn key life skills in a realistic setting.

## Young talent at Friday night gig



Katy Pickles, 18, performing one the songs from her EP at a gig to launch a new studio Lancaster &amp; Morecambe College studio

**Y**oung musicians in the North West sounded out their new recording studio at a recent launch night.

Lancaster & Morecambe College learners playing at the event includ the headline act, rising Lancaster talent Katy Pickles, 18, who has just recorded a five-track EP at the college's new LMC studios.

Katy, who studies HNC level four music performance and technology, said: "It has been

a privilege to work with my tutor, Louis Davy on this project.

"Not only have I had access to fantastic facilities run by a fantastic team, but I have been given support with several other aspects concerning my musical development and the release of my EP. I couldn't have asked for a better experience."

College principal, David Wood, described the event as "a perfect Friday night".

## Scott makes it through the Maze



Scott Brackenbury, 17, has got a job as a commis chef at a Gordon Ramsay restaurant

**A** young chef from Lincolnshire has joined celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay's Maze restaurant in London.

Scott Brackenbury, 17, who is completing a catering apprenticeship at Boston College's restaurant, was given just two days' notice to attend a trial day at the top restaurant.

Staff were so impressed that they offered him a job as commis chef half way through his 16-hour trial, a decision that normally takes a few days.

Scott said: "I am really excited but a bit nervous too."

"I always knew I wanted to go down to London; I'm really looking forward to learning lots more and hopefully progressing within the restaurant."

Scott follows in the footsteps of another former Boston College student, Jason Atherton, who was Ramsay's executive chef when Maze was launched in 2005. He has since started his own restaurant company.

# Chief Executive



With a turnover of £47m and 15,000 students, Blackburn College is one of England's most successful Further and Higher Education Colleges. Operating from a £50m state of the art campus, the College has positioned itself as one of the foremost providers of further and higher education in the North West.

The current Principal and Chief Executive is resigning and the role will be split, allowing the College to move to a group structure. The Chief Executive will have overall responsibility for strategy and will scope potential partnerships, collaborations and alliances in a largely external role.

This is a rare opportunity for the successful candidate to build a vibrant and diverse business, underpinned by a prestigious and highly respected brand at its core and supported by a generous remuneration and benefits package to reflect the importance of this key role.

**The Role:**

- Working at a highly strategic level to develop and deliver Blackburn's ambitious growth strategy, fulfilling the Governing Body's vision for the continuing development of the organisation.
- Identifying and developing business streams locally, regionally, nationally and internationally; accessing and influencing key senior stakeholders from both the private and public sectors to position the College to optimise opportunities.
- Oversee a large and complex organisation to deliver a robust business as well as effective services. Foster a culture of excellence to ensure that all learners achieve the highest quality outcomes.

**The Candidate:**

- Excellent leadership and management skills; inspirational and credible, with well-developed interpersonal, representational and influencing skills.
- Strategically influential with the ability to translate vision into commercial success, aligned with senior change management experience. Successful track record of delivering large and complex contracts within high quality 'people' services.
- Passionate about the transformative power of education and ambitious for all learners and employers in the region to have access to world-class services that will meet their needs now and for the future.

Please visit [www.odgers.com/43075](http://www.odgers.com/43075) for a Candidate Brief containing application details, or contact us quoting reference MMG/43075. The closing date for applications is 13 May 2013.

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If you have any questions about applying please contact Human Resources on 01752 305322 or e-mail [recruitment@cityplym.ac.uk](mailto:recruitment@cityplym.ac.uk)

City College Plymouth is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

The College is an equal opportunities employer



## FE Week publication dates May - July 2013

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
29	30	May 1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31	June 1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
July 1	2	3	4	5	6	7

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2. Good business acumen with sound financial skills
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4. Excellent presentation and communication skills at all levels, verbal and written, demonstrating the ability to convey complex messages clearly

**The deadline for the applications is Monday 20th May 2013, 12.00 noon  
To apply go to <http://www.ntn-wbl.org.uk/>**

## Clinical Educator

Circa £35,000 | 38 hours per week  
Job ref: JDSFHLD23



Skills for Health is the Sector Skills Council for the health sector.

We are working in partnership with NHS North West supporting the delivery of highly regarded pre-employment training programmes, including apprenticeships, for 16 to 18 year olds who wish to pursue a career within the NHS. These programmes are run in partnership with NHS organisations and local Further Education providers; this post is a partnership with Salford City College and Salford Royal Foundation Trust.

We are looking for someone special to work as part of our Greater Manchester Cadet Programme; this post offers an exciting career opportunity for a suitably qualified individual with a passion for sharing their knowledge and expertise with young people in order to support them in progressing into employment or onto higher education. The successful candidate will support 16 to 18 year old Cadets who are undertaking sector specific programmes, nationally and regionally through Skills for Health Academy North West (Academy). Cadet programmes are recognised as models of best practice, achieving excellent results in supporting young people and helping employers in the North West secure the future workforce.

For an informal discussion about this opportunity, please contact Catherine Ferguson Cadet Development Lead (GM) on 07825 522721.

Applications for this post should be made by completing the attached application form (please note we do not accept CVs as an application). Please include details of how in your view you meet the criteria set out in the job description and person specification. Apply here.

Alternatively the job description, supporting information and application form can be obtained from the Skills for Health Website or the Human Resources Department at Skills for Health, 1st Floor Goldsmiths House, Broad Plain, Bristol BS2 0JP. Email recruitment@skillsforhealth.org.uk. Telephone 0117 9221155.

The closing date is: 19 May 2013  
Interviews to be held on: 5 June 2013

# Vice Principal

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**Closing date: Monday, 20 May 2013**

**Assessments and Interviews will take place on Monday, 10 June 2013**



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**MidKent College**



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Closing date: 12 noon, Thursday 16 May 2013



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### FE Week Sudoku challenge

2	4		1	5				
								9
7		2			3	1		
			4					9
	3				5			
4			7					
9	6			1		4		
8								
		2	5		6	3		

Difficulty:  
**EASY**

How to play: Fill in all blank squares making sure that each row, column and 3 by 3 box contains the numbers 1 to 9

Solutions: Next week

### Last Week's solutions

3	8	9	4	2	1	6	7	5
6	4	1	3	5	7	8	9	2
2	5	7	6	9	8	1	4	3
7	2	6	8	1	3	9	5	4
9	3	5	2	4	6	7	8	1
4	1	8	9	7	5	3	2	6
8	9	4	1	3	2	5	6	7
1	7	2	5	6	9	4	3	8
5	6	3	7	8	4	2	1	9

Difficulty:  
**EASY**

Difficulty:  
**MEDIUM**

					1		
9		4					7
8		5	6				
3	9			4	8		
7		1	6				4
	1	8			2	5	
			4	8		1	
5				4		9	
	3						

7	9	4	5	8	3	2	6	1
5	6	3	9	2	1	7	8	4
2	8	1	7	6	4	9	3	5
9	1	2	8	5	7	6	4	3
6	5	8	4	3	2	1	9	7
4	3	7	6	1	9	5	2	8
8	4	6	2	7	5	3	1	9
3	2	5	1	9	8	4	7	6
1	7	9	3	4	6	8	5	2

Difficulty:  
**MEDIUM**

### FE Week mini-mascot

Follow the adventures of *FE Week's* biggest and smallest fan!



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You can also follow our *FE Week* mini-mascot on Twitter @daniellinford